

### III.—ON THE NIDIFICATION OF *MEGALOPREPIA* *MAGNIFICA*, THE MAGNIFICENT FRUIT PIGEON.

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*Columbia magnifica*, Temm., Trans. Linn. Soc. xiii. p. 125 (1821).

*Carpophaga magnifica*, Gould, Bds. Austr. v. pl. 58 (1848).

*Megaloprepia magnifica*, Salvad., Cat. Bds. Brit. Mus. xxi. p. 167 (1893).

The Magnificent Fruit Pigeon is freely dispersed throughout the rich coastal brushes of Eastern Australia, from the neighbourhood of Cairns in North-eastern Queensland to Berry in New South Wales. In the latter colony it is far more frequently met with in that rich belt of luxurious vegetation lying between the Tweed and Bellinger Rivers, than it is in the humid valleys and mountain ranges of the south coastal district. At Cairns it overlaps the closely allied, but decidedly smaller species *M. assimilis*, which ranges northward from that locality to Cape York.

Although *M. magnifica* is plentifully distributed throughout these brushes nothing has hitherto been recorded of its nidification. For an opportunity of examining a nest and egg of this species I am indebted to Mr. George Savidge, a most enthusiastic oologist, who has lately found this fine Pigeon breeding on the Upper Clarence. Mr. Savidge has also forwarded me a skin of the female shot at the nest, together with the following notes relative to procuring the nest and egg:—

“Having been told by some timber-drawers that they had discovered three nests of *Megaloprepia magnifica* at Pine Scrub, Oaky Creek, Upper Clarence, each with a single egg, and upon which the birds were sitting, I determined to pay a visit to these scrubs to search for the nests. Accompanied by a friend, Mr. Thos. Woods, and an aboriginal called Freddy, we started at daylight on the morning of November 8th, 1896, and arrived at our destination, twenty-five miles distant a little after ten. Several nests were seen but they contained neither eggs or young, and after a long search we decided upon going further into the scrub. The peculiar call of *M. magnifica* could be heard on all sides, and at last after searching for several hours we saw one fly from a tree about twenty-five yards in advance. Upon nearing the tree we discovered the nest, and the egg could be plainly seen in it. Wishing to obtain the bird we sat down for some time, but eventually decided to move lower down the creek into closer concealment, as I thought the bird might be watching us and would not return. After waiting a quarter of an hour we observed the Pigeon fly

back and settle on a thick branch. I did not fire as it was a bit too far, and its body protected by the limb it was sitting upon. After having a good look round it flew into a thick patch of scrub a few yards away and was lost to view, however, it soon came back and settled about two feet from the nest, and facing us. I was afraid the spread of shot might shatter the nest, but as it was getting late I fired and the bird fell into a small pool of water beneath. The egg was secured after some trouble as the nest was built on the end of a thin outspreading branch of a 'Scrub Elm,' about twenty feet from the ground. The scoop had to be used, and the nest was so small I was afraid the egg would roll over, and it took the black some time before he got it safely into the net. The limb was then chopped off and the nest secured. Upon dissection of the bird, which proved to be the female, no other egg was found in it approaching maturity, the largest being the size of a pea."

The nest of *M. magnifica*, is an exceedingly small and perfectly flat structure, and with the exception of a few long straggling sticks lying almost parallel to the branch on which it is placed, barely averages five inches in diameter. It is built at the junction of a forked horizontal branch of an *Aphananthe philippinensis*, which is partially covered with a growth of moss. The nest is composed of thin sticks and twigs intermingled with the wiry spiral tendrils of a vine; the latter material wholly forming the centre of the structure for the reception of the egg. When sitting the Magnificent Fruit Pigeon would almost conceal the nest for very little of it is visible below the branch. The green leafy twigs which sprout out in close proximity to the nest, also harmonises well with the colour of the back, wings, and tail of the sitting bird, and renders it less liable to detection. The egg is pure white, elongate oval in form, and there is very little difference in the shape of the two ends, the texture of the shell being very fine and the surface lustreless. It measures 1.57 inch in length by 1.2 inch in breadth.

Specimens of *Megaloprepia magnifica* and *M. assimilis* from different localities measure as follows:—

*M. magnifica.*

Sex.	Length.	Wing.	Tail.	Bill.	Tarsus.	Locality.
♀ ad.	17.25 in.	9.1	7.6	0.83	1.1	Clarence River, N.S.W.
♂ ad.	17.5	9.1	7.75	0.85	1.1	Maryborough, Wide Bay, Queensland.

*M. assimilis.*

♂ ad.	13.5	7.6	6.75	0.78	1.05	Cairns, N.E. Queensland
♀ ad.	13	7.1	6.3	0.62	1 in.	Cape York, N. Australia.

7th January, 1897.

